

FUTURE MEDICAL PROGRESS

By whom the future triumphs of our art are to be achieved;—by whom the great movement, which the last twenty-five years have impressed upon medical science, is to be sustained and carried on; and to whom the honors and rewards of sustaining this movement, and of urging it forward to the development of its full results are to accrue,—can hardly be regarded as questions of vain curiosity, merely, or of doubtful speculation. A careful study of the tendencies of the general medical mind, in the different leading portions of the scientific world, and an impartial estimate of its character, and peculiarities, would not fail, I think, of furnishing answers to these questions, at least of probable or approximative certainty. Such a comprehensive study, and estimate, my own want of familiarity with the languages, the literature, and the science of all the countries of continental Europe, excepting France,—even if there were no other reasons,—would prevent me from undertaking; and I propose, merely, in the few remaining pages of my essay, to take a brief and cursory view of the questions, which I have stated, so far only as they relate to France, Great Britain, and the United States; and, even in this limited view, I shall confine myself entirely to those portions of our science and art consisting of internal, or medical pathology, and its relations,—or, in other words,—to what is commonly called *practical medicine*.

Let us look first at the character of medical science, and of the general medical mind, in France. And the peculiarities of this character it requires but little pains to discover; they are impressed in such broad and deep lines of the history of medicine in France, during the present century, as to force themselves on our notice, and to render this period one of the most remarkable epochs in the annals of medical science. It may be designated as that of the origin and establishment of the *Modern School of Medical Observation*. This school is characterized by its strict adherence to the study and analysis of morbid phenomena and their relationships; by the accuracy, the positiveness, and the minute detail, which it has carried into this study and analysis; and by its rejection, as an essential or legitimate element of science, of all *à priori* reasoning or speculation. The spirit which animates, and guides, and moves it, is

expressed in the saying of Rousseau,—*that all science is in the facts or phenomena of nature and their relationships, and not in the mind of man, which discovers and interprets them.* . . .

This school has given birth in France to a series of very remarkable works,—the fruits and records of its labors,—a summary notice or enumeration of the principal of which will serve better, perhaps, than anything else, to illustrate its character and its achievements. One of the earliest formal manifestations of that spirit and tendency of the French medical mind, which led, in their farther progress and their full development, to the formation of the school, of which I am speaking, is to be found in the work of Prost, entitled, "*Medicine illustrated by observation, and the examination of bodies;*" published in 1804. This publication, although in many respects faulty and imperfect, *marred by à priori* reasonings and gratuitous conclusions, is conceived, and executed, on the whole, in the right spirit; and marks very clearly the bright dawn of the new era. It is mostly made up of short histories,—evidently fair, careful, and trustworthy,—including the symptoms, and the lesions found on examination after death,—of more than one hundred cases of various kinds of disease. Four years later, in 1808, appeared Broussais's immortal *History of Chronic Inflammations*; a work which constituted one of the corner stones of that temple of true science, which he himself, at a later day, and under the influence of a false philosophy, strove, with such blind but giant efforts, to destroy. . . .

Bartlett, Elisha: *An Essay on the Philosophy of Medical Science*. Philadelphia, Lea and Blanchard, 1844, pp. 294-97.